

LANGWORTHY

BLINDNESS IN FICTION



AMERICAN FOUNDATION
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BLINDNESS IN FICTION¹A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDE OF AUTHORS TOWARDS THEIR BLIND
CHARACTERS

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"Blindness is an inconvenience," said one courageous man without vision. So it is and one of the greatest from which mortal man can suffer. But to a high-spirited person thus handicapped a greater trial still is the attitude of the world of men towards his deprivation.

If a person without sight is normal in his relations to others, capable of taking care of himself, clever in making the most of his remaining faculties,—and there are many such,—people attribute to him marvelous qualities, call him "wonderful," think some mysterious sort of compensation has been made him on account of his lack of vision. If he belongs to the incapable and weak-willed classes who live upon the economic fringe of life, the added handicap of blindness will probably send him to the charity organizations, but the fact of his natural economic level will not be considered. He will only be thrown the bone of contemptuous pity with the remark, "Poor fellow, he cannot help it, he is blind," and the fact of his lack of sight will bear the whole burden of his misfortunes. Similarly, among that pitiful class, the blind feeble-minded, the determining handicap is evidently the feeble-mindedness, but by nine persons out of ten all his defects will be attributed to his blindness. If he is of the amiable and retiring type it is said that, "The blind are naturally good and pious." If he is fortunate enough to be gifted musi-

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cally it is remarked that "The blind are natural musicians." It is hard for seeing persons to realize how unfortunate and unfair these attitudes are. Few people learn to think of normal persons without sight as merely men and women in the dark, with all the differences of disposition, ability and temperament that the seeing have. Few realize that the term "the blind" is no more an accurate classification than its opposite "the seeing."

No matter what the blind person's talents or lack of them are, all that he does, whether good or ill, is a result, in the minds of most people of his handicap. This is most discouraging to our capable and courageous blind friends. It takes from them all credit for making the most of the things that remain, of overcoming their obstacles, and of becoming as many do thoroughly normal-minded men and women. In N. S. Shaler's book, *The Neighbor*, the author says that the primitive man in us dreads and fears anything strange or different from ourselves. Much of the dislike of foreigners or of men of alien race is to be accounted for in this way. This instinctive shrinking, repugnance, or dislike gives way when we come in contact with the stranger, learn to know him, and try to help him. In a somewhat similar way, perhaps, persons who do not often come in contact with blindness shrink from the condition and misunderstand the one bearing it. Persons who do not see are comparatively few in number, possibly one in fifteen hundred of our population. Many men and women seldom meet a non-seeing person and when they do, treat him with a lack of consideration that is sometimes tragic. Not only socially but economically the mistaken notions of the public make life difficult for the educated blind person. So true is this that far-sighted superintendents of schools for the blind say that there are two phases of the education of the blind; one of the children who come to our schools,—a comparatively easy and interesting task,—and the other of the public, who should receive them and give them a chance to show what they can do in the work-a-day world as they do other young graduates. Their field of possibilities of employment will be more limited than that of seeing persons but there is much they can do if given the chance. This second

phase represents a very difficult undertaking and the discouragements are many; nevertheless teachers of the blind owe it to their students to do all that is possible.

Works of fiction reflect these attitudes of the general public. Many authors, like other persons, have shown an interest in the handicap of blindness. Unfortunately it is not always an intelligent or helpful interest. In the special library of blindiana at the Perkins Institution for the Blind, there are 311 titles of straight fiction, besides magazine articles, religious stories, old comedies, poetry, and the like, in all 442 titles, each containing a blind character. They were written by seeing people out of their belief of what non-seeing people should be and do. The best criticisms of them come from blind people who have first-hand knowledge. The number of titles indicates that the handicap of blindness is interesting to writers and that they think it will be to their readers. The kind of interest manifested is still more suggestive than the fact of it. To many a world without light, color, the far view, is an unbearable and even an uncanny place, and it is inconceivable to them that any one can live a life even approaching normal, shut in by the limitations that accompany the loss of the "queen of the senses." The characters of their books show their distorted outlook. Sometimes the blind characters are studied with a degree of care and show some information about the ways of blind people, but usually they embody the feelings of the author,—as of the general public,—of pity, awe, or idealization of an unknown and little understood condition. Since the blind are already a misunderstood class, each new work of fiction sent out to a credulous public with an unfortunate presentation of a blind character adds to the burden of misunderstanding and, naturally, the abler and more interesting the book is the more harm it can do to persons already struggling with a major handicap.

On reading these numerous works of fiction, not from the point of view of interesting or artistic stories but as a study of the blind characters described in them, we find in general four sorts of blind persons: the idealized and abnormally good; the repugnant and abnormally bad; the extremely clever; and the

normal and well-described. To this classification might be added a fifth, partaking of the qualities of the ones already mentioned, but rather different in spirit, the readjustment of the newly blinded to their condition, including a recent interest, the war-blinded, who are usually described with considerable sympathy and insight. The lines drawn among these divisions are not altogether sharp and exclusive, characteristics of one type sometimes being found in another. Comparatively few books may be taken as instances of the general attitudes of authors towards the blind.

The idealized blind person more or less well portrayed occurs most often. Here we find that authors,—as well as others,—both over-estimate and under-estimate the perceptions and abilities of those who do not see.

In *Blind Sight* by B. Y. Benediall, we have a blind girl as heroine. For blindness of such short duration, Ursula is rather too skilful for reality. It takes time to recover from such an accident as hers had been, and the rehabilitation takes still longer, yet we find her using a typewriter readily and reading braille fluently. These useful helps as well as her writing board, "a rule fitted in grooves, for regulating the lines" (p. 96) show that the author had some knowledge of such contrivances, but the arrangement of her room with its chairs running on sunken rails (p. 105) is not true to a blind person's needs. Neither do blind girls like to have their rooms bare of pictures and other ornamentation. They are more likely to wish to have them like other girls' rooms. Blind persons crave above everything to do as seeing people do, not to be different. Why should Ursula ever have needed "guiding cords from the ceiling" (p. 106) and how would they have helped her? The rest of the house is not arranged on this plan and Ursula is by no means confined to her room. Teachers of the blind believe that as few special helps as possible should be used in the education of blind pupils since they will not have such aids when they leave school. Her friends conspire to keep unpleasant things from her that she may be as happy as possible. Since she is a lover of sincerity this lack of truthfulness in her friends is revolting to her and she

suffers from it more than from her lack of sight. The author properly estimates this as one of the chief tragedies of blindness. Never try to deceive a person without sight. You will not succeed long and he, if any one, is entitled to the truth. Deception however well meant is wrong. In general the attitude of Ursula's friends adds to the burden she is carrying. She "was hailed cheerfully by some, lacrymosely by others, openly pitied by a child of fourteen" (p. 33). Only the hero treats her with sincerity as a human being, and this is the basis of the attraction to him that she feels. This is excellent, but Ursula is too clever a girl to have been deceived by the character of her future brother-in-law. Moreover she must have known him before her blindness and such characters do not develop in a day.

The use of curious and strange devices to help blind persons get about in familiar places is often found in books, to the great amusement of the blind themselves, who realize that it is not by such extraneous aids that they learn to move about, but by means of hearing, touch, facial perception, and all that goes to make up good orientation. Some blind persons acquire excellent orientation and others seem to have little sense of direction. Cannot all of us go about familiar places in the dark? Surely a person permanently in the dark can do the same, and indeed many blind persons through habit and training become exceedingly, sometimes uncannily, skilful in it, and even learn to steer their way successfully in unfamiliar situations. The theme of deceiving a blind person into believing that conditions are other than the facts is also often used, but always with a woeful lack of reality. Mrs. Barclay's popular book, *The Rosary*, is utterly scorned by all the blind persons whom I know for both these reasons. Charles Dickens in *The Cricket on the Hearth* makes one of his few failures in characterization in the person of poor Bertha, who appears to be nothing but a little fool, instead of the sweet girl he wishes to depict. Dickens's example may have influenced others, for we find the same theme, for example, in *The House of Windows* by Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, where the blindness of Ada Brown serves the purpose of making the situation of the two sisters more interesting and pathetic; in *The*

Deliverance by Ellen Glasgow; in *The Flower of the Dusk* by Myrtle Reed, and in many other books.

A pleasing child, considerably idealized but on the whole naturally drawn is found as a minor character in *Shining Ferry*, by A. T. Quiller-Couch. An excellent and helpful thought comes out in a conversation between the boy's grandfather, John Rosewarne, and his aunt, Mrs. Purchase. Looking out of the window at Clem playing with his devoted sister Myra, Rosewarne says:

"I wonder if that boy could be trained and made fit for something." To which Mrs. Purchase replies:

"Eh, is it Clem? My dear man, he is the brains of the family."

"Where's the use of it? What's a blind man at the best?"

"What God meant him to be. If God means him to do better, ay, or to see clearer than other men, 't isn't a pair of darkened eyes will prevent it." (Pp. 69-70.)

This book also brings out the truth that blind children gain greatly in development by association with seeing children. Many parents of blind children make the mistake of keeping the non-seeing child apart from seeing children, "for fear they will get hurt." Better a few bumps, such as all children get, than an undeveloped mind, poor in the experiences of childhood. Clem is finally sent to an institution for the blind but is so homesick for his sister Myra that he has to be removed. When his Aunt Hannah comes for him she finds him in the dim study hall, unlit as yet, for "the blind need no lamps" (p. 365) which makes for us an unattractive picture of schools for the blind, and untrue to facts, for our schools for the blind are as full of windows and artificially as well lighted as schools for the seeing; for one reason because these schools contain many seeing persons as the faculty, and there are many pupils who are educationally and economically blind, but not totally without sight; besides this, light has its peculiar, beneficent, and recognized effect even upon the totally blind.

Highly idealized, even mystical characters are found in *Deborah*, by James M. Ludlow, and in Hall Caine's *The Scape-*

goat. The books are thrilling with interest but do not conform very closely to the psychology of blindness.

Persons who are both blind and deaf are not often treated by authors, but such an idealized character is found in *God's Fool* by Maarten Maartens, a book full of the pathos of a life wrecked by the fault of others. Little Elias Lossel, adored grandson and heir of a millionaire tea merchant, receives a blow caused by his small half-brother which injures the brain. First hearing, then sight leave him, and gradually the shadows deepen over his brain, so that his intellect never develops beyond that of an eight or nine year-old child. He learns to distinguish letters made upon his hand, and so communication with the world around him is reopened. He recognizes the touch of persons whom he knows,—an observation entirely correct,—and even can sense the presence of those *whom he loves* when they come into the room with him. To sense a presence in the room is not impossible but that the boy should be able to distinguish friend from foe in this way seems rather far-fetched. It is upon this improbable ability that the plot turns. The author has considerable appreciation of the shut-in condition of the double deprivation, and some knowledge of the ways in which help has been attempted. Elias talks laboriously, since he could speak before he became deaf, enjoys walking, loves his plants and pets and potters contentedly about his garden. The story of the afflicted boy and the wrongs done him by those who have the power is a most pathetic one.

William Sterns Davis's stories are always interesting and in his *Falaise of the Blessed Voice* we find a beautiful blind girl, idealized, but not so much so as to be unnatural. Most things that Falaise does are entirely possible for a clever blind girl. "You are blind?" said the Queen. "I see with my ears and my hands," Falaise answered. She knows every stone of the old chateau, even its secret stairways and passageways and can go where she wishes. Her rescue of the wronged queen from the dungeon is dramatic, and for us who know the almost uncanny sense of direction which some blind persons possess, not impossible. She blows out the light to render powerless their enemy,

Alithe, who has come to gloat over the helpless queen, binds and gags her, dresses the queen in Alithe's cloak, and by her sure knowledge of distance and direction guides her lady to safety.

Idealized blind characters are found in many books. We need only mention Muriel, in Mrs. Dinah Maria Muloch Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman*, and Nydia, in Bulwer Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*. It is Nydia's keen sense of direction which enables her to lead others through the darkened streets of the doomed city after the eruption of Vesuvius. The writer has known a similar instance when blind girls led their seeing teachers through the smoke of a burning building to safety. *The Palms* by A. H. Dorsey, and *Melody* by Mrs. Laura E. Richards are other books with idealized blind characters.

In the books mentioned the blind characters have been ideally good, according to the notion of many people that blind persons are naturally good,—or perhaps, have little opportunity to be otherwise. Certain writers, however, have emphasized badness in their blind characters. It is a curious speculation to inquire why this is. Is it because blindness as a physical condition is repugnant to them? Are they lovers of perfection, and do they regard blindness as imperfection? Is the condition symbolic to them of mental darkness? Or, possibly, have they known some unregenerate person without sight and so have translated his misdeeds to the blind characters of their books?

One of the first wicked characters we think of is Pew, Stevenson's villainous blind pirate in *Treasure Island*, with "his voice so cruel and cold and ugly," clever in ability and utterly remorseless in his dealings. Another disagreeable blind character found in Stevenson's works is Duncan McKeigh, in *Kidnapped*. He is a guide who can shoot by the ear at several yards. Charles Dickens, who gave us Bertha, gives us also his horrible conception of Stagg in *Barnaby Rudge*. He is the proprietor of a wretched damp cellar where the Prentice Knights hold their secret meetings. Deceit and intrigue are the food on which he lives. Another evil character is Larsen, the brutal captain of the sailing vessel in Jack London's story, *The Sea Wolf*, who becomes blind during the course of the story, but loses none of his malignity.

Mrs. V. Sackville-West has a strange conception in her book, *The Dragon in Shallow Waters*. The story is set in an atmosphere of horror, accented by the mist and fog of the landscape, and presided over by the malignity of two brothers, one blind and the other deaf from birth. Both are efficient workers in the soap factories, are strong well-built men, and apparently well-educated, for Silas Dene reads braille rapidly, has a passion for books, of which he has read a great many, and torrential gift of words; while Gregory communicates with those around him in rapid finger talk, and is a skilful draughtsman. Silas is bitter over his blindness, resents any reference to it, and hates pity. Some temperaments take this attitude towards their blindness, though personally I believe them to be very few. He is harsh, wantonly cruel, and malignant. As a picture of a blind man he is not convincing, for he writes with paper and pencil, easily, quickly, and legibly, in "able, definite letters." Pencil writing is taught successfully at Perkins Institution, but the best writing is done in square printed letters made by a definite rule on paper laid over a piece of leatherboard with parallel grooved lines. Silas feels his way across a familiar room, yet out of doors apparently hardly needs guidance. Following his hated brother Gregory, he moves confidently, as with perfect vision, climbs a narrow outside stairway to the gallery around the soap vats, and closes in a death grapple with his brother. The author thus sometimes emphasizes the handicap of lack of vision, and sometimes seems to forget that her hero is blind at all. Silas's expression of what blindness means to him is one of the strongest points of the story:

"Did you ever consider what blindness meant? To be dependent on others' charity, to be a burden, a maimed thing! Above all, to have to submit to pity, when you were born with a spirit that wanted the envy of other men!" (P. 258.)

The Night Riders by Ridgewell Cullum is an exciting tale of ranch life in Montana. It centers around the evil character of Julian Marbolt, in whom blindness is used to cloak wickedness. The climax of the story reveals that he is blind only in daylight, but has night vision,—a possibility among diseases of the eye,

and rather ingeniously used. *The Three Hostages* by John Buchan has a blind woman, the mother of the hero. She does not take a very active part in the story but her presence is felt all the way through it, and her blindness seems to be introduced to emphasize her secret and sinister powers. She is described as a woman with a beautiful face, fine, strong hands, and a lulling voice able to hypnotize her victims into submission. She is called "the blind spinner" indicating that she holds many threads of the plot, like the Norns, and is as inexorable as they.

The extremely clever blind man has been another theme of the novelists. The problem of matching the powers of a keen intellect against the handicap of physical disability of some kind is attractive, and as blindness is one of the greatest handicaps to which a man can be subjected the problem of his ability to surmount his difficulties and achieve success is fascinating. Basil Santoine in *The Blind Man's Eyes* is an exceedingly clever blind lawyer. He might, in fact, be called an impersonated intellect. The character is on the whole well and reasonably drawn, though some of the common inconsistencies in the description of blind persons are found here also. The authors, William McHarg and Edwin Balmer, bring out well and truly that not lack of physical sight but dependence is the real tragedy of blindness. It is one of the tragedies of the hero's life that he is always held back by his blindness and must submit to guidance, and the fact that his intellect is superior to that of most men makes it all the more galling to him that many matters must be trusted to others who may betray his confidence. In fact, he trusts no one fully but his daughter, who is his "eyes." His blindness always obtrudes upon his consciousness and he feels deeply his frequent helplessness. *At 1:30* by Isabel Ostrander is a story of a crime unraveled by a blind detective. The author tries to give her story a plausible air by permitting her hero always to give an explanation by the way he gains his marvelous results,—not by any miracle, but by better use of the faculties remaining to him than most men make. The interesting part of the story to the student of blindness is that however unlikely it may be that one person should combine all these

remarkable qualities, yet none of them is impossible under the urge of a keen brain. *Thornley Colton, Blind Detective*, by Clinton H. Stagg, however, runs wild with this idea of cleverness on the part of a blind man and does not keep within the realm of probability. Thornley Colton is a remarkable man and surely a marvel as a blind man. He seems to be a reaction from the common idea of people that if a person without sight can do anything at all except sit in a sunny corner, he is "wonderful." This is a feeling on the part of seeing persons that has done the unseeing much harm.

Some writers when depicting a blind character have taken him seriously and have made a study of the handicap of blindness. The results are true to life, in proportion to the author's opportunity for study and his realization of the condition. Somewhat in a class by itself is Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch*. The author wished to portray the effect of restoration to vision upon a person blind from birth or early infancy and therefore made a special study of Diderot's *Lettre sur Les Aveugles*, then the most interesting literature on the subject. He follows Diderot in his correct and his erroneous ideas, bringing in the sayings of "the blind man of Puisaux" and after the operation on Lucilla's eyes, also the stories of the youth who was operated on for cataract by the famous surgeon of Diderot's time, Cheselden. Just as with him, Lucilla must learn to walk again, she cannot judge distance or size, or distinguish one object from another by its mere looks. She mistakes the cat for the dog, until she can put her hands upon them. Wilkie Collins's interest in the problem of blindness is evident for he has another story, *The Dead Secret*, with a blind man normally developed who has recently become blind and is not altogether used to his condition. An author who had peculiar opportunities for studying blind persons was Marion Crawford, the nephew of Julia Ward Howe. He was a frequent visitor at the home of his aunt at or near the Perkins Institution, and his characterization of the blind girl Inez in the story, *In the Palace of the King*, shows first hand knowledge. Many other books have minor blind characters, more or less true to life. *An Egyptian Princess* by

Georg Ebers has the character of Kassandane, the blind queen mother. The interest here is chiefly in the knowledge of diseases of the eye possessed by the Egyptians, supported by the author in copious foot-notes. The book also has an old blind man seated under a plane tree near the gates of Sardis singing sad ditties to the listening crowd and accompanying himself on the twenty-stringed Lydian lute. He does not enter the story otherwise but he is typical of the usual condition of the blind in ancient times and the attitude of the public towards them,—an attitude which persists to some degree even to this day. Charles D. Stewart in *Valley Waters* draws an impressive picture apparently from life, of Vose, a natural and normal man. In *Far in the Forest*, H. Weir Mitchell with the observation of a man of science draws from life, as he tells us, the character of Philetus Richmond who had lost his sight at the age of fifty but could still swing an axe with the best of the woodsmen. He is willing to accept pity from boys and women but never from men unless they can beat him at his own game of tree-felling. H. G. Wells's short story, *The Country of the Blind*, embodies the strange fancy of a land where all the inhabitants are blind, and the one seeing man who strays in is at a disadvantage in relation to those whose lives are ordered on the basis of four senses. It has been remarked that the greatest difficulties of the blind arise from the fact that the world as constituted was made "by the seeing for the seeing." This story tries to reverse this order and construct a world on the basis of four senses.

Miss Edith Ballinger Price made a special study of little blind children in the Boston Nursery for Blind Babies and the Perkins Kindergarten for the blind and as a result of her study has written two books containing charming blind children, the little boy, Kirk, in *The Happy Venture*, and the little girl, Lee Kelton, in *My Lady Lee*. In the latter story, Lee Kelton is adopted by a young woman, Anne Ramsey, who becomes the real heroine of the story. Anne's intention is to bring the child up naturally in the loving atmosphere of a wise home, without over-indulgence and without fore-ordination towards a special workshop for the blind; rather to allow her to develop her own

talents as other children do, and to make of her "a different sort of blind person." Miss Burke, head of the Nursery from which Anne takes the child, warns her wisely of the difficulties ahead; "I have no fear that you'll spoil her but you'll have a hard time saving her from your friends." And so it proves, for, as Anne finds, the public exhibits three wrong attitudes towards a blind child,—pity, wonder, and incredulity, and all three are deadening to self-respect, initiative and confidence in the blind person. As a child, Lee is charming and true to life. When circumstances force Anne to put her in a school for the blind, we have a rather unfortunate and unfair picture of such schools, which it should be said are now-a-days places of joy and opportunity for little children deprived of their rightful heritage of sight. That there are schools not at all like the one she describes, Miss Price is willing to admit. Lee, grown up and out in the world is not very interesting, in fact she may be called a rather tiresome young person, and the episode of her being able to deceive for a considerable time as to her blindness a young man who is attracted to her seems impossible. A clever criticism of the book has been written in a letter to a friend by a blind woman. I make a short quotation:

Miss Price is a much more clever writer than I could ever be, and since she took the girl out from a class of people of whom I know but very little except from books, I feel that I am in no position to criticise. . . . To me, the really likable and interesting personality, in spite of her many mistakes, is Anne, not Lee. . . . To my way of thinking, two things are fundamentally wrong with the book. The emphasis is too often placed on trifles, while important things are left out. In the second place, why ring the changes upon blindness all the time, and make everything hang upon that fact, when you and I know what very likely Miss Price does not, that there is much in life, every day we live it, that has little or no bearing upon being blind. . . . One reason why I could never write a successful story about a blind girl is that there would be so much in her life and her mind, that being blind, inescapable calamity though it is, could not possibly be the central fact to be harped upon every minute,—it simply is not big enough to make the entire background of a story.

The indomitable spirit of many of our blind friends pervades this quotation. Self-pity and a desire for special consideration

are far from the thoughts of such persons as the writer of the above paragraph. Miss Price has nevertheless done a good piece of work from first-hand knowledge of blind children, has presented the complex problem of their training, and in this way has put teachers in her debt.

Another phase of the interest in persons who do not see concerns the problems of the newly blinded and their readjustment to life. *The Glory of the Conquered* was written by Susan Glasspell. It is the story of the tragedy of blindness coming upon a man in the full tide of his career of usefulness. The struggle to hold and keep faith and courage, to change "Vae Victis" to "Gloria Victis" is well, though somewhat sentimentally treated. It is a rather easy solution of the problem to make her hero die at the end of the book, but probably the author did not know what else to do with him. The attempt to deceive a blind person is used again in this book, and is an unattractive part of the story. In *The Keeper of the Door* by Ethel Dell is found Noel, the brother of the hero. He is blinded suddenly by a bomb, and the story contains a good description of the feelings of one who becomes suddenly blind. *The Best of a Bad Job* by Norman Duncan has Tom Tulk, snow-blinded off the Newfoundland coast. He discovers the use of echoes in guiding a ship.

A recent development of the interest in blind people has been caused by the war. A story most compelling in its appeal is by a French author, René Boylesve, translated by Louise Seymour Houghton, *You No Longer Count*, representing the spirit of France, whose people rose to the pitch of feeling that the individual no longer mattered, since France was in danger. The blinded soldiers who have given their precious gift of sight to their country are a special interest and responsibility. *The Bells of St. Johns* by Mrs. Richmond contains Miles, the hero, blinded in the war, and on his return driven nearly to distraction by the unremitting attentions of his family. Frederick Palmer's hero, Phillip Sanford, in *The Old Blood*, becomes temporarily both blind and deaf from the shock of a bursting shell which horribly wounded his face. Fortunately a series of

operations restores the wounded jaw, his eyes and ears gradually recover, and happiness comes to all.

In drama and poetry, we also find some blind characters. The first one who comes to mind is Samson, in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. The hero blinded and in the hands of his enemies, but rising triumphant over them and doing one more deed for Israel, is a figure of Milton himself old and blinded in his country's service. Longfellow's translation from the Gascon, *The Blind Girl of Castèl Cuillè*, *King René's Daughter* by Henrik Hertz, and Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* all contain blind characters. Maeterlinck has a symbolic drama, *The Blind*, in which all the characters are blind, symbolic of a world lost in unfaith.

The books mentioned while by no means exhausting the number written with the interest of blindness illustrate fairly well the attitude of writers and of the public towards those who do not see,—mostly, as the illustrations show, an idealizing attitude, sometimes one of wonder and exaggeration, sometimes one of repugnance. Occasionally the sane and normal attitude is shown, which regards the person without sight as a human being with a handicap which must either render him over twenty per cent less efficient, or must call forth all his powers of will and energy to overcome it. But what the world does not realize is that there have been many useful, many even famous, persons who do not see, both men and women, who have so mounted over their handicap as to make it a stepping stone instead of a stumbling block. Their lives are more fascinating and romantic than any fiction written about blind people; for these tales are true. They are the high lights among those who do not see, just as such persons are among the seeing. Henry Fawcett, postmaster general of England; Sir Francis Campbell, an American, knighted for his services in the education of the blind in England; Clarence Hawkes, nature writer, whose books are in many schools, and whose *Hitting the Dark Trail* should be read by every one as a piece of inspirational literature; Dr. Babcock, specialist in the diseases of the heart; Fanny Crosby, hymn writer, who said "The blind can accomplish nearly every thing the seeing can do;" Helen Keller, writer,

the blind and deaf woman whom every one honors; Sir Arthur Pearson, founder of St. Dunstan's, the great school for the rehabilitation of blinded soldiers in London, who when he realized that his sight was leaving him, said, "I shall soon be blind, but I will never be a blind man,—I am going to be *the* blind man." He proceeded to put his resolution in force, even dispensing with the services of his valet, in order that he might learn to become more skilful in caring for himself. He says: "The first step is to acquire the will to overcome blindness in every possible way, and to approach as nearly as may be to a perfectly normal life. And this cannot be done without determination to leave depression behind, and to adopt a cheerful mental outlook. This outlook is easy to talk about, but difficult to practice."

These men and women and many others like them know whereof they speak. They are the last to claim for themselves extraordinary or miraculous powers and a compensatory quickening of the other senses. They succeeded by sheer force of will, pluck, determination, and the ability to make better use of their remaining senses than do most people. Their success did not come because of their blindness, but in spite of it. They are the real *Heroes of Darkness*, and to a study of their achievements all persons interested in the problems of blindness are commended.

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